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TAGS: PREL PGOV GG

SUBJECT: DFM MANJGALADZE'S READOUT OF HIS MEETING WITH KARASIN

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 22, Deputy Foreign Minister Giorgi Manjgaladze called in the Ambassador and the German Charge (representing the EU) to give a readout of his recent meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin. Manjgaladze said Karasin did not present anything new and thought the main goal of the meeting was to show the Europeans and Americans that the two sides were talking. He said the Russians basically presented a "wish list of apologies" that they wanted from the Georgians on a number of issues. The one positive to come from the meeting, he said, was an agreement between the sides that President Saakashvili would meet with President Putin on the margins of the CIS conference in St. Petersburg on June 9-10. Separately, Manjgaladze reiterated Georgia's strong opposition to a Geneva-style meeting in New York with Abkhaz de-facto foreign minister Sergei Shamba, emphasizing that Georgia would not participate in such a meeting. End Summary.

Russia's 'wish list' of apologies

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¶2. (C) Manjgaladze characterized his two hour meeting with Karasin as disappointing, particularly on issues relating to resolution of the conflicts. He said his impression was that the Russians had asked for the meeting so that they could show the Europeans and the Americans that the two sides were talking, but did not have any new messages to deliver. Karasin presented what Manjgaladze called a "wish list of apologies" that the Russians wanted from the Georgians on a number of issues, including: the Georgian case against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the Georgian handling of the Russian spy case, Georgia's demand to legalize customs checkpoints in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a condition for Georgian approval for Russia's WTO membership, and Georgian refusal to sign a non-use of force agreement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He said the Russians still do not know how to handle the new situation on the ground in South Ossetia. He also said he told Karasin that Georgia is convinced that Kokoiti cannot act without Russian approval and that the GoG would hold Russia responsible for any new provocations.

¶3. (C) Manjgaladze said that he confirmed with Karasin that Russian President Putin would meet with President Saakashvili on the margins of the CIS conference in St. Petersburg on June 9-10. He said that President Saakashvili would raise a number of issues with President Putin, but did not elaborate.

Manjgaladze noted that Karasin expressed a willingness to start negotiations on the resumption of commercial air flights and lifting of the Russian boycott on Georgian agricultural goods, and said that the Georgians would be ready to discuss these issues.

Geneva-style meeting in New York unacceptable to GoG

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¶4. (C) Separately, Manjgaladze said that Georgia was strongly opposed to a proposed Geneva-style meeting for Abkhaz de-facto foreign minister Sergei Shamba at the New York. He said that Georgia would not attend such a meeting, and added that he would recommend discontinuing Georgia's participation in future Geneva-style meetings if the meeting went ahead. He said allowing Shamba to attend would undermine the Geneva format and allow Russia to use the meeting as a stage for Shamba. The Ambassador asked what was the best way to re-establish communication between the Georgians and Abkhaz. Manjgaladze replied that the Abkhaz are finding excuses not to engage in negotiations and have adopted a total ban on communication to prevent further progress on the resolution of the conflict.

TEFFT